

### QUIET TIME

#### Theme: God's guidance

- Try to make a specific time every day to meet Jesus Christ through reading and meditating his Word.
- Pray, talk with Jesus Christ and make a few short notes about this Bible passage in your notebook.
- Record what you discover, what speaks to your mind and heart, what you find difficult or what you understand.

- Day 1 Psalm 32:1-9  
God guides a person whom he has forgiven
- Day 2 Psalm 119:97-105  
God guides a person who loves his Word
- Day 3 Psalm 143:7-10  
God guides you by means of your quiet time – your daily reading of the Bible and prayer
- Day 4 2 Timothy 3:14-17  
God's guidance through his Holy Spirit is never in conflict with his guidance through his Word (the Bible) (cf. Ephesians 6:17)
- Day 5<sup>BS</sup> Jeremiah 23:16-32  
God does not guide by means of every prophet, vision or dream. He guides through his Word
- Day 6 Isaiah 30:1-5,9-22  
God does not guide a rebellious person. He guides a person who waits upon him
- Day 7 Proverbs 1:20-33  
God does not guide a person as long as he neglects God's previous guidance
- Day 8 Judges 6:11-21,36-40  
God guides Gideon first by speaking to him and then confirms his guidance with a sign Gideon asked
- Day 9 Deuteronomy 18:9-22  
God never guides by means of occultism. He guides by means of his Prophet (singular: Acts 3:22).
- Day 10 Isaiah 8:11-20  
God never guides by means of the spirits of the dead. He guides by means of his Word.
- Think about Matthew 6:13. "Lead us not into temptation" (cf. lesson 32, 'Assurance of victory').
  - Pray every day for someone or something specific and wait in expectation for what God is going to do (Psalm 5:3).

### STUDY

#### Theme: Discovering God's will

Read study 34 carefully before the next meeting. If you have questions, write them down and mail them to one of your group leaders. We will seek an answer together.

### BIBLE STUDY

#### Theme: Seeking God's guidance from the grain, not the straw

If you like, you may already prepare the Bible Study for the coming meeting by reading through the Bible passage. Make use of the 5-step Bible Study method. The Bible passage is: **Jeremiah 23:9-40**

### MEMORISATION

#### 1. Motivation

Jesus memorised Bible verses (Luke 4:4-13). Are you doing that?

#### 2. Memorisation

Memorise this verse in the Bible version of your choice.

#### GOD'S GUIDANCE

##### Psalm 32:8

I will instruct you and teach you  
in the way you should go;  
I will counsel you and watch over you

##### Psalm 32:8 (NIV)

#### 3. Review and back-review

*Review* the last 5 memorised verses once every day and back-review all other memorised verses once every three weeks.

## 34. Discovering God's will

**As a Christian you have the privilege and responsibility to discover God's will and seek his guidance in your life (Ephesians 5:10,17). God promises to guide you (Psalm 32:8-9). He has given you the Bible in which he has revealed his will, his plan for your life and his guidance. The Bible is a map and a compass for your life (Psalm 119:105).**

God has a plan for the whole world and this includes his plan for your personal life. Your specific task in life and your specific contribution fits your personality, because God devised you and his plan for your life together. God desires to guide you personally so that he may accomplish his plan for your life.

But in order to discover God's will and plan for your life, you need to know God. The more you know God's character, the more you will trust God and his plan for your life (Psalm 145:8-9; 23:1-6). The more you know God's truth (in the Bible), the more you will understand God's will and specific plan for your life.

God does not reveal his complete plan for the world or for your life. A part of God's plan remains hidden (Deuteronomy 29:29a). That is why you cannot always understand his reasons for allowing difficult circumstances in your life. But you may always trust that the purpose of his hidden will is always for your good (Romans 8:28). Luckily God reveals very much about his will and plan. He does this so that you may be able to develop a personal relationship with Christ (God) and obey him without hesitation.

But how does God reveal his will and plan? How can you discover God's will in order to make the decisions and choices you need to make? God does this by giving you instructions in the Bible. God gives you *specific instructions* as well as *general instructions* about how you can discover and obey his will.

### A. SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS TO DISCOVER GOD'S WILL

#### What are specific instructions?

God's specific instructions are: the commandments, prohibitions and teachings in the Bible (correctly explained) about *what you must or must not do*. For example, God *commands* you to honour your parents (Exodus 20:12). God *forbids* you to get involved in sexual immorality (Exodus 20:14). And God *teaches* you to forgive others (Matthew 6:14-15). All these specific instructions must be obeyed.

When you seek God's will in order to make a decision or choice, you must **first** discover and obey all God's specific instructions in the Bible with regard to the subject you are considering.

*[the subject = the issue in which you seek God's guidance and must make a decision or choice]*

### ✓ SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS IN THE BIBLE ABOUT THE SUBJECT

In order to make a decision or choice ask yourself the following *questions*:

*Knowledge*. What are God's specific instructions in the Bible about the subject? (Psalm 119:105; Luke 10:25-26; Romans 15:4a; 1 Corinthians 10:6,11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

*Explanation*: Which commands, prohibitions and teachings in the Bible are applicable? Study the Bible and record what the Bible says about the subject. Always explain (interpret) the Bible correctly in its context (2 Timothy 2:15).

*Attitude*. To what extent am I willing to do God's will, no matter what it may be? (Matthew 21:28-32; Luke 6:46-49).

*Explanation*: God expects that you not only know his will, but that you do his will.

*Obedience*. To what extent am I now already obeying what God has revealed to me earlier? (Proverbs 1:32-33) (*Read Proverbs 1:22-33*).

*Explanation*: As long as you do not obey what God has said to you before, you cannot expect him to reveal to you more of his will or teach you new things.

*Touched*. Which truth in the Bible passage touched my mind or heart? What motivated me during my quiet time? (Psalm 119:130; Psalm 143:8,10; Isaiah 50:4-5).

*Explanation*: *Expect God to speak to you when you have a quiet time, read or study the Bible*. See to it that you do not twist the meaning or intention of God's words, especially when you apply them.

### B. SEVEN GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS TO DISCOVER GOD'S WILL

#### What are general instructions?

When there are no specific instructions in the Bible about the subject in question, then God gives you the freedom to make a *wise decision or choice*.

There are several general instructions in the Bible to help you make a wise decision or choice. Consider things that *please God* (Ephesians 5:10). Consider what is *wise* (Ephesians 5:15-16). And consider what is *beneficial and constructive* (1 Corinthians 10:23).

God gives you seven general instructions to discover his will and seek his guidance. Regard these seven general instructions as light beacons that pilot your ship into the harbour, that is, that that guide you towards making the right decision or choice. The seven light beacons must all stand in one line, before you may be sure that God is guiding you into a particular direction. The seven general instructions for making a decision or choice are the following:

### (1) WISDOM AND FREEDOM

#### √ Instruction 1: Make a wise decision or choice

God guides Christians by means of wisdom. The sources of wisdom are: God's Word (Psalm 119:97-100), God's Spirit (Isaiah 11:2), prayer (James 1:5), counsellors (Proverbs 11:14) and research (using your mind) (Nehemiah 2). In order to make a wise decision or choice, ask yourself the following questions about the subject:

What is *good* and what is *better*? (1 Corinthians 7:1,9).

What *brings trouble* and what *makes happy*? (1 Corinthians 7:28,40).

What is *permitted* and what is *beneficial and constructive*? (1 Corinthians 10:23).

What is *advisable* and what is *a necessity*? (1 Corinthians 16:4; 2 Corinthians 9:5).

*Explanation:* Even if a particular decision or approach is good, permitted and even possible, there may always be another decision or approach that is better, more beneficial and constructive and even very necessary. Therefore don't be content with merely what is 'good'. Rather choose 'the best'!

God' wisdom will most often guide you to one decision or choice. But when diverse possibilities are equally good, beneficial, constructive and necessary, then God gives you the freedom to make a choice out of these possibilities.

### (2) ADVICE FROM WISE PEOPLE AND PARENTS

#### √ Instruction 2: Make a decision or choice only after considering the advice of others

God gives wise people and parents to give advice to you. God warns you not to be obstinate (Isaiah 30:1-2a). In order to make a wise decision or choice, ask yourself the following questions about the subject:

What *advice* do spiritual mature and righteous Christians give to me regarding the subject? What advice do wise non-Christians give to me? (Proverbs 15:22).

*Explanation:* The more advice you ask, the more facts you are able to consider. The better these people know you,

your circumstances and the subject in question, the better advice they are able to give. When the subject in question is a spiritual or moral matter, then your advisors must be spiritually mature Christians who respect God (1 Corinthians 2:12-16, 1 Peter 3:12).

When I am still under age, what *advice* do my parents give me regarding the subject? (Proverbs 1:8-9).

*Explanation:* Especially when you are under age, God uses your parents to raise you and educate you. Only when your parents ask you to do something that is against God's commands, you must gently refuse to obey them (Matthew 10:37, Acts 5:29).

Am I *neglecting* to follow advice I should follow or am I *avoiding* asking advice from someone I should ask? (Proverbs 1:25-26).

### (3) ABILITIES AND TASKS

#### √ Instruction 3: Make a decision or choice that strengthen your abilities and calling

God has created you with a special personality for a special meaningful task. In order to make a wise decision or choice, you may ask yourself the following questions:

Which *natural abilities and spiritual gifts* has God given me and how does he want me to use them in order to carry out his plan? (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

*Explanation:* God is your Creator. He has given you abilities and gifts so that you can live according to his will and plan. Your abilities and limitations are an indication from God with respect to his will for your life.

To what extent does my decision or choice promote or hinder the development of my *personality* (breaking it down or building it up) and the execution of my task? (2 Corinthians 13:10).

*Explanation:* You must withdraw from relationships and activities that have a negative influence on you (Psalm 1:1; Proverbs 1:10,15; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). Seek relationships and activities that spur you on to love people and do good works (Hebrews 10:24-25).

To which activity or tasks does God give me a sense of priority or an understanding that it is more important than another activity or task? Why? (Matthew 6:33)

*Explanation:* Not everything in life is equally important. Give your best time and energy to matters that last for eternity (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:18; 5:7; Colossians 3:1-3).

### (4) FACTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES

#### √ Instruction 4: Make a decision or choice on the basis of facts rather than circumstances

God remains the Sovereign King with respect to your place and circumstances in life (Acts 14:16-17; Acts 17:26-27). In order to make a wise decision or choice, you

need to ask yourself the following questions:

Have I gathered sufficient *facts* (information) about the subject in question? (Proverbs 25:2; Nehemiah 2).

What are my *circumstances*?

*Explanation:* Do your circumstances lead you in the same direction as God's guidance through the other six instructions? (1 Corinthians 16:8-9).

Can I say with a good conscience that I have *not arranged* my circumstances?

*Explanation:* You cannot expect God to guide you when you have a bad conscience. (Acts 24:16).

Do the *hindrances* I experience come from God in order to stop me (Acts 16:6-10)? Or do they come from Satan in order to challenge me to persevere in faith (1 Thessalonians 2:18)?

*Explanation:* Satan can influence your circumstances to stop you, but God can change your circumstances. Pray and ask God to give you discernment to see whether the hindrances you experience come from Satan to discourage you or from God to develop your character.

## (5) THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

**Instruction 5: Make a decision or choice on the basis of honest deliberations and attitudes**

God expects you to love him with your mind and your heart (Mark 12:30). In order to make a wise decision or choice, you need to ask yourself the following questions:

What are my real *desires*? What are my *deliberations* (*thoughts*, arguments, motives) and what are my *attitudes* (*feelings*)? (1 Chronicles 28:9; Psalm 37:46).

*Explanation:* Tell God all your desires? Discuss your motives with God. Discover whether your desires and feelings are in accordance with God's will, thus strengthening God's will, or whether they try to convince you not to do God's will and instead make a worse than good or wrong decision or choice.

To what extent does my decision or choice influence the life of other *dependent people* (e.g. wife and children)? What do they think and feel? (Philippians 2:3-4).

*Explanation:* Do not only consider your own interests, but also the interests of others in your neighbourhood.

When I consider these instructions, do I experience continual *peace* in my heart and a growing conviction that God is guiding me? (Isaiah 32:17). Or do I feel uneasy about the matter, become more impatient and experience inner confusion and struggle? (Isaiah 57:20-21).

## (6) THE RIGHT TIME AND FAITH

**Instruction 6: Make no overhasty decision or choice**

God gives you enough time to do what you ought to do (Ecclesiastes 8:5b-6a). For everything there is a proper time. In order to make a wise decision or choice, you need to ask yourself the following questions:

Is there anything that causes me to want to act *too quickly*? (Proverbs 19:2).

*Explanation:* Never make an overhasty decision or choice. Think well through the various issues and consequences, because you can make big mistakes through selfish ambition, too little self-control, pride, a desire for revenge and impatience.

Or is there anything that causes me to want to act *too slowly*? Do my desires and feelings refrain me from making a decision or choice, while I already know what God's will is? (Ephesians 5:15-16; James 1:5-8).

*Explanation:* Do not put off an important decision or choice too long. When God has given you an answer, do not hesitate and wait for an e-mail or SMS message from heaven.

Am I spiritually old enough to understand the various important issues and their consequences? Or do I first need to *grow more* in order to make a responsible decision or choice? (Hebrews 5:14).

*Explanation:* In order to make decisions with regard to dating, marriage and a special calling from God you need to be spiritually mature.

Does God want me to make this decision or choice by *faith* or does he want me to refrain from making a decision also by faith? (Hebrews 11:6).

*Explanation:* When you have followed God's general instructions and later discover that you have nevertheless made a wrong decision or choice, then trust that God will overrule your mistake and nevertheless work for your good (Romans 8:28).

## (7) PRAYER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Instruction 7: Make a decision or choice prayerfully and in line with God's Spirit**

God has given you direct access to himself through prayer (Luke 11:9). The Holy Spirit teaches you the truth, convicts you of sin and judgement, and reminds you of the words of God (John 16:13). In order to make a wise decision or choice, you need to ask yourself the following questions:

Have I *prayed adequately* about all the information received through the seven instructions (Philippians 4:6-7).

*Explanation:* Open your heart for God's Spirit and tell

him what you think, feel and desire. Keep on praying until you know what you must do. Or does your praying change and you feel less and less an urge to pray about the matter in question?

Does *the Holy Spirit* guide me in the direction of a particular choice (Acts 11:12a) or away from that choice (Acts 16:7)?

*Explanation:* The Holy Spirit will never guide you in contradiction to what is written in the Bible, because the Bible has been inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16-17)!

### C. HOW DO YOU MAKE A WISE DECISION OR CHOICE?

Always first consider the specific instructions in the Bible about the matter in question. Only after this you must consider the seven general instructions.

Record the information received from the specific and general instructions. If you can't make a decision yet, you probably miss some information. Wait, gather some more

information and keep on praying. If the matter is emotionally loaded (dating, marriage, healing or calling) give a higher priority to the specific instructions in the Bible and the advice from mature counsellors who fear God.

Do not take for granted that God will lead you through a single Bible verse that jump out of the Bible at you, but explain that verse in its context and according to the rules for that genre in the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15).

When all the information gained point in one direction, you should make a decision and act in faith.

If things nevertheless become difficult, then “do not doubt in the dark what God told you in the light”. Just keep on doing what he told you before.

The final prerequisite for discovering God's will is the willingness to accept and to submit to *his perfect will* (Matthew 6:10; Luke 22:42b). Therefore always pray: “Not my will, but yours be done.”